

# The EU's partners in crisis response and peacebuilding: complementarities and synergies with the UN and OSCE

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# The EU's partners in crisis response and peacebuilding: complementarities and synergies with the UN and OSCE

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## ABSTRACT

A stated aim in the EU Global Strategy is for the EU to work with partners in addressing crises across the world. This article analyses such potential in the area of crisis response and peacebuilding, with an emphasis on the EU's interaction with the UN and OSCE. It starts off comparatively by examining where the EU, UN and OSCE add value in crisis response and peacebuilding and reach complementarities. It shows that deployments differ across geographical locations and that the mandates of these organizations vary considerably with the EU focusing on police capacity building, the OSCE on the judiciary and the UN providing monitoring functions. In the second half, the article uses insights from cooperation between these organizations on the ground in Kosovo, Mali and Armenia to determine levels of interaction. Despite relatively few conflicts between these organizations, we find that they continue to work in parallel with each organization focusing on their narrow mandate and competences.

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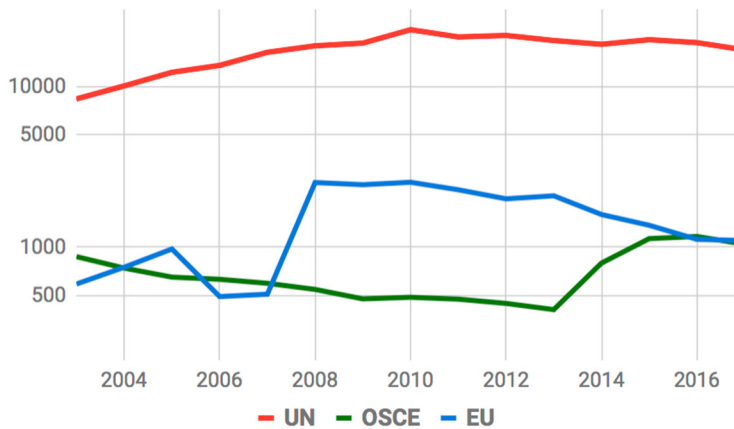
## Introduction

A stated aim in the recent EU Global Strategy (2016) is for the European Union (EU) to work with partners in addressing crises across the world. The EU cannot make dinner *and* do the dishes (cf. Kagan, 2003). It needs to work with reliable partners in conflict prevention, crisis management and peacebuilding. This article evaluates the complementarity and synergies between the EU, United Nations (UN) and Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in civilian crisis response. These organizations are three of the largest actors in terms of civilian deployments. It argues that while there is potential for complementarity, as a result of a degree of geographical and functional differentiation between these three organizations, day-to-day synergies remain limited. The article provides empirical evidence from fieldwork in Kosovo, Mali and Armenia.

The EU is a relatively recent actor in civilian crisis response—its first civilian mission in the context of the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) was only launched in

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**Figure 1.** UN, EU and OSCE deployments. Sources: UN peacekeeping website, SIPRI Yearbooks and OSCE annual reports.

2003. It has established itself nevertheless as a serious security actor. While it is not straightforward to compare “missions” by the EU, UN and OSCE because they differ considerably,<sup>1</sup> the EU has taken over the OSCE in terms of civilian deployments (see Figure 1). Both remain, however, small compared to the approximately 17,000 deployed civilians as part of the UN peacekeeping and political missions. Most importantly, all three organizations have established themselves permanently in the field of crisis response. Even though the OSCE faced decline during the 2000s, its large-scale mission in Ukraine since 2014 shows again its relevance.

The first section of this article provides new data on the geographical and functional differentiation of the three organizations. It shows that while they are all active in civilian crisis response, they do not do the same things with the EU focusing on police capacity building, the OSCE on the judiciary and the UN providing monitoring functions. The second section provides evidence of day-to-day synergies in Kosovo, Mali and Armenia.<sup>2</sup> While the EU is the lead international actor in Kosovo and a significant actor in Mali, it is a secondary actor in Armenia. The article shows that in these countries the EU, UN and OSCE largely work in parallel. Where they provide support for each other, it is mostly diplomatic support through statements or financial support for projects. There is hardly any material support in terms of personnel and equipment exchanges. This shows the clear limits in terms of synergies.

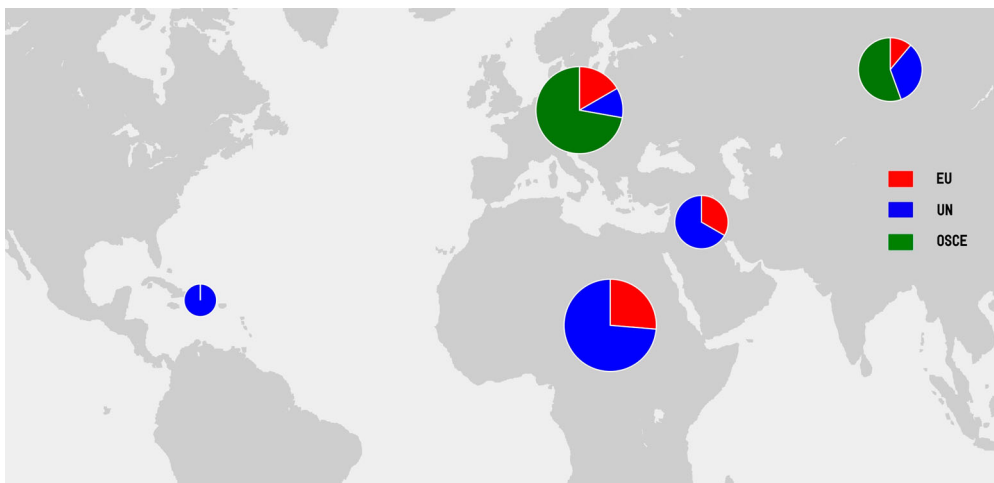
### Complementarities in crisis response and peacebuilding

While the EU, UN and OSCE are three prominent actors in civilian crisis response, they operate in fact in different geographical theatres and also have different sorts of mandates. Such geographical and functional differentiation potentially allows for complementarities and synergies between these organizations, as they are not obvious rivals. This section first discusses geographical differentiation before turning to functional differentiation. As such it provides a rare comparative perspective on what these three organizations do in civilian conflict response.<sup>3</sup> This empirical analysis forms the basis for the in-depth case study analysis in the second half of the article.

It does not come as a surprise that the EU, UN and OSCE prioritize different geographical regions in the area of crisis response. Yet it is useful nonetheless to provide a full overview. [Figure 2](#) shows the total number of EU, UN and OSCE missions per geographical region in 2015. It is clear that Africa has the strongest presence of the international community, with 19 civilian missions, closely followed by Europe with 18. There are nine missions in Central Asia, six in the Middle East and one mission in Haiti. In terms of the geographical division of labour, it is worth noting that the UN, as a universal international organization, is present in all regions. The OSCE is only present in its participating states and Kosovo. The EU has a significant presence in its immediate but increasingly also wider neighbourhood. To understand how this geographical differentiation came about we need to discuss these organizations individually.

The EU deployment patterns are a reflection of different issues. First, the CSDP was established during the late 1990s as a reaction to the inadequate response of the EU to the wars in former Yugoslavia (Deighton, 2002; Howorth, 2001; Hunter, 2002). Unsurprisingly, the EU has a strong presence in the Western Balkans, but also Ukraine and Georgia. Second, EU member states have had diverse interests in sub-Saharan Africa as a result of their colonial pasts. Coupled with the ambition of some member states for the CSDP to be more than a regional policy, this has resulted in missions in Democratic Republic of Congo (Gegout, 2005; Olsen, 2009; Vines, 2010). Third, as the EU is a member of the Middle East Peace Process, it has also made niche capabilities available in the Palestinian Territories (Bouris, 2012). Finally, more recently, the EU takes a more strategic approach to its deployments with police training in Afghanistan, counter-piracy missions off the coast of Somalia, capacity-building missions (to combat terrorism) in the Sahel region, and the anti-human trafficking mission off the coast of Libya (Biscop, 2016; Germond & Smith, 2009; Skeppström, Wiklund, & Jonsson, 2015).

The situation is different in the UN, where peacekeeping and political operations largely follow some of the world's major conflicts (as well as the interests of the permanent five

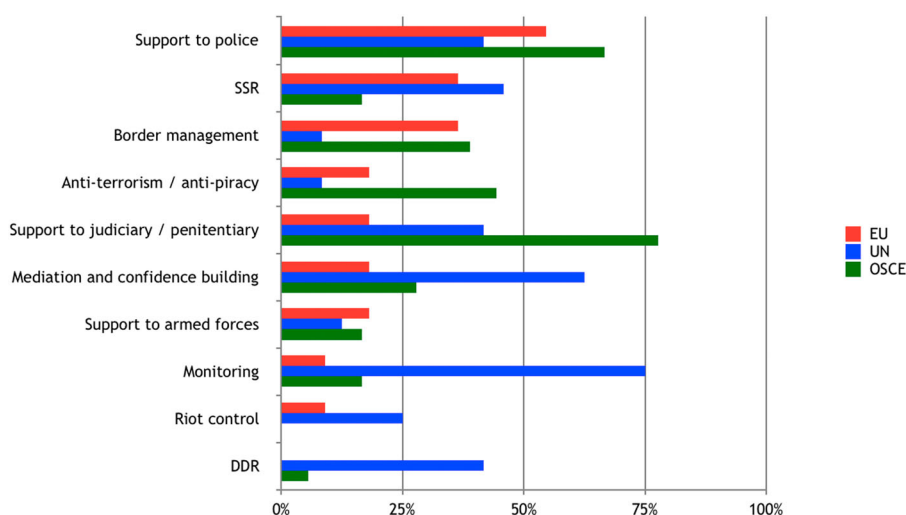


**Figure 2.** Number of EU, UN and OSCE missions per region in 2015. Sources: UN peacekeeping website, SIPRI Yearbooks, OSCE annual reports. The regions include the Americas, Europe including the Caucasus, Africa, Middle-East and Asia (from left to right). For visual reasons, the size of the pie-charts is not completely proportional to the total number of missions in each region.

members of the Security Council) (Gilligan & Stedman, 2003; Ruggeri, Dorussen, & Gizelis, 2016; also Koops, MacQueen, Tardy, & Williams, 2015). Africa is, in this respect, the continent with the highest number of missions (in Central African Republic, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Libya, Mali, Somalia, South Sudan, two missions in Sudan, Western Sahara and regional missions in Central Africa and West Africa). The other regions host comparatively fewer missions but, with the highest number of missions in general, the UN is still an active player in all of them. Namely, at the time of writing, four missions were deployed in the Middle East (in Iraq, Lebanon, Syria and a regional truce mission covering the whole region), three in Asia (in Afghanistan, India and Pakistan, and regional mission in Central Asia), two in Europe (Cyprus and Kosovo) and, as mentioned above, one in Haiti.

Finally, the OSCE activities are concentrated in its participating states in Europe and Central Asia. It started deploying “missions of long duration” in the Western Balkans in 1992 as well as transition missions in the newly independent former Soviet states (Bellamy & Griffin, 2002; Galbreath, 2007). As can be seen in Figure 2, OSCE missions are dominant in both regions. No fewer than 13 missions are located in Europe (in Albania, Baku, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, to Minsk Conference, in Moldova, Montenegro, Serbia, Skopje, Yerevan, and three missions inside Ukraine or at Ukrainian-Russian border) and five missions in Central Asia (Astana, Ashgabat, Bishkek, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan). It is important, however, to point out that OSCE missions are often small deployments. They also often carry out functions that in the EU fall under the responsibility of the local EU Delegations rather than civilian CSDP.

Whereas the geographical differentiation between the EU, UN and OSCE is not entirely surprising, an important question is what these missions actually do. Here we find significant differences between these three organizations (see Figure 3). On the basis of the formal mandates of ongoing missions in 2015, we have inductively identified 10 major categories of conflict prevention, crisis management and peacebuilding functions. Overall, an



**Figure 3.** Tasks of EU, UN and OSCE ongoing missions mentioned in their formal mandates (as of 31 December 2015). 100% implies that all ongoing missions of organization A carry out task Z.

average civilian mission deployed by the EU, UN and OSCE carried out 3.15 tasks. Contrary to popular wisdom on the comprehensive approach and multidimensional missions, this actually shows that the missions' mandates tend to be focused on a particular task/sector.

In comparison to the UN and OSCE, the EU deploys relatively focused civilian missions. An average EU mission in 2015 was mandated with only 2.18 tasks. The most common task is support to police, with just over half of the missions carrying it out (6 of 11 missions), followed by Security Sector Reform (SSR) and border management (each by 4 of the 11 missions). Four other tasks are each carried out by two different EU missions each: anti-terrorism / anti-piracy activities, support to judiciary, mediation, and support to armed forces. Only one mission is responsible for monitoring the implementation of a peace agreement (Georgia) and none of the missions deal with Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR).

The situation is different for the UN, which has the most comprehensive missions of the three organizations – on average 3.63 tasks per mission. It is also the only organization which covered all 10 identified tasks across its missions. For the UN, the most common task by far is the monitoring of peace agreements, conducted by 18 of 24 missions. Similar to the EU, support to police is also an important component (15 missions). SSR followed with 11 missions; and DDR, and support to both police and judiciary were dealt with by 10 missions. Other tasks were less common: riot control was carried out by six missions, support to armed forces by three missions, and both counter-terrorism and anti-piracy activities and border management by two missions.

Finally, the OSCE missions are situated in between the EU and UN with regard to the breadth of their activities. On average they carry out 3.11 tasks. Contrary to the UN and especially to the EU, support to the judiciary is the most common task, with 14 of 18 OSCE missions addressing this. Almost equally important is support to police, in line with the other two organizations, with 12 missions working in this field. Counter-terrorism and anti-piracy activities as well as border management were also rather common tasks, although slightly less so, with respectively eight and seven missions addressing them. Other activities were less common: mediation was carried out by five missions; monitoring, support to armed forces and SSR by three; and only one mission dealt with DDR. Finally, riot control was not part of the mandate of any OSCE mission, which is unsurprising given the lack of executive functions possessed by the organization.

While the picture on geographical and functional differentiation is not entirely neat, civilian crisis response by the EU, UN and OSCE seems to be much more about complementarity than overlap and competition (cf. Brosig, 2011; Lynch, 2009; Novosseloff, 2012; Tardy, 2005; Van Willigen & Koops, 2015). There are undoubtedly instances of friction between the EU and OSCE in Europe and the EU and UN in Africa and some functions are prioritized by all three organizations, but on the whole there seems to be a division of labour, albeit informal. The UN is the go-to organization when it comes to monitoring, mediation and DDR, and the OSCE has strong expertise on the judiciary. The tasks of the EU in civilian CSDP are limited to police, SSR and border management. These complementarities in civilian crisis response are important, because they potentially allow for clear synergies by the international community in actual operating theatres.



## Inter-organizational synergies in Kosovo, Mali and Armenia

To study how the complementarities between the EU, UN and OSCE can actually be utilized, we conducted 29 interviews on the ground in Kosovo (Pristina), Mali (Bamako) and Armenia (Yerevan). These cases were selected as a result of the varying role of the EU. The EU is the most important international civilian actor in Kosovo, through its rule of law mission (EULEX) and the political work by the EU Delegation and Special Representative. As such it is more prominent than the hollowed out UN mission (UNMIK) and the smaller presence of the OSCE (Eckhard & Dijkstra, 2017). In Mali, the EU is a significant actor as a result of its two CSDP missions. It works, in this respect, alongside the UN peacekeeping mission which is the key security actor. In Armenia, the EU is much more of a secondary actor. The OSCE takes the lead both in terms of the conflict with Azerbaijan and in SSR activities. The EU plays a supportive role, including through funding, whereas the UN mostly concentrates on development functions.

In terms of synergies, we analyse how these three international organizations concretely work together to achieve common objectives (on inter-organizational relations, see Biermann & Koops, 2017). We focus, in this respect, not just on coordination, but also on the actual exchange of civilian capabilities, such as diplomatic and political support for each others' work, project funding, exchanges of staff, and use of equipment. We find that across the case studies synergies are limited. Coordination itself is already a challenge for these organizations, and the exchange of capabilities is limited to diplomatic and political support and occasional extra-budgetary project funding. As such, there is much more potential for actual synergies between these organizations on the ground.

In terms of *coordination*, there are uneven practices. In Kosovo, despite the political difficulties between the EU, UN and OSCE (Dijkstra, 2011; Visoka & Bolton, 2011), there are various channels for coordination between the respective missions. The UNMIK interagency Monday morning meetings have survived from pre-independence times when the UN mission consisted of different "pillars" for which the EU, OSCE and other international actors each had responsibility. Only UNMIK and OSCE, however, send Heads of Missions to these meetings, while other participating organizations are represented by lower-level staff (interview #10). Meetings are also regularly organized between the chiefs of staff of the different missions, as are meetings between counterparts from the different rule of law sections (police, judiciary, etc.). These meetings are not used for strategic planning, but to discuss more practical issues, such as situational relations and staffing (interview #9). Despite the organization of all these regular formal meetings, it appears, however, that the most important interactions between the Heads of Missions take place over ad hoc informal lunches.

Because of the lower number of international actors present in Mali, coordination often takes the form of direct liaison between the UN and EU missions. The intensity of coordination is, however, lower. For instance, a strategic meeting is held every three months between EU Head of Mission and UN Police Commissioner to identify strategic objectives and possible actions at political and national levels to support mandate implementation. At lower levels, a monthly technical meeting is held between EU Head of Operations and UN Deputy Police Commissioner, whereas technical experts have more frequent exchanges (interviews #15 and #17). Furthermore, liaison officers have been appointed to improve communication between the EU mission and the UN Police Component. In Armenia, in contrast, coordination is limited. While there is regular donor coordination



run by the UN Development Programme, there is no coordination between international organizations in the area of SSR. The EU and OSCE simply avoid getting in each other's way. While there are some exchanges regarding the mediation of the OSCE in the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan, this takes place at the level of headquarters–Brussels, Vienna, and New York.

Tangible synergies come in the form of *political and diplomatic support*. For instance, the OSCE is leading mediation between Armenia and Azerbaijan, but its role is contested. Following the Four Day War in April 2016, the two conflicting parties, for instance, have asked for other (stronger) international organizations to take over and for the inclusion of more regional powers in the process (e.g. Turkey). The EU and UN have, in this respect, used their diplomatic clout to support the authority of the OSCE. For instance, the EU High Representative, Federica Mogherini, attends the OSCE Ministerial Meetings and has expressed the EU's explicit support for the efforts of the OSCE Minsk Group and its three co-chairs (Mogherini, 2016a, 2016b). Such public support is significant, also because it shows the two parties that there is no alternative. It helps to increase the authority of the OSCE.

In Kosovo, at a lower level of diplomatic support, an interviewee (#10) described an instance of, what can be called, “logo switching”. International organizations tend to shift visible support for certain programme, depending on which side in conflict they are primarily seeking to address. The UN flag is auspicious for the Serbian side, but UNMIK does not enjoy popularity among central authorities in Pristina. There have been instances of UNMIK and OSCE co-organizing an event, when UNMIK would provide more funding, but only the OSCE logo would be visible, in order to attract Kosovar institutions. The EU may use its logo to lend support to the other international organizations, even if it is not funding their activities. For instance, the EU provided the Media Justice Transparency Initiative of the OSCE with such support, while its contribution was limited to the simple participation of EULEX judges in panel discussions among Kosovar judiciary and journalists.

When it comes to *financial support* for each other's work, the EU member states pay a significant share of the UN peacekeeping (32%) and OSCE budget (70%), yet since they do not channel such resources through the EU (funding goes directly from the member states to the UN and OSCE), the EU does not have any leverage. This stands in contrast to, for instance, the African Peace Facility, through which the EU disburses several hundreds of million euros each year to African Union peace operations. Yet apart from regular funding, the EU (excluding its member states) is the largest extra-budgetary contributor to the OSCE. In 2016, it spent 9.5m euros on all OSCE projects (about 28% of the total project budget) (OSCE, 2017). This is meaningful, given that the OSCE Unified Budget is only about 142m euros/year, yet it does not make the OSCE fully dependent on the EU either.

The logic of much of the EU's financial support is that the EU is principally a donor and not a do-er. For the implementation of projects, it typically recruits a partner, which can be a NGO but also another international organization, such as the UN, OSCE or Council of Europe. In Kosovo, for instance, the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) has been selected by the EU to construct border crossings between Serbia and Kosovo. It was selected not just for its previous experience and knowhow, but also because the UN is status-neutral and thus a UN agency is more acceptable for Serbia (interview #9). In the case of Armenia, while the EU does currently not fund SSR projects by the OSCE, it is

worth pointing at the EU's accompanying measures for the OSCE mediated peace process with Azerbaijan. Through the European Partnership for the Peaceful Settlement of the Conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh (EPNK), the EU funds people-to-people projects (track II diplomacy). This is therefore indirect support for the OSCE-led process.

When going beyond diplomatic support and funding, exchanges of capabilities are more limited. The EU, UN and OSCE make some use of each other's *mission support capabilities*, but this is largely on an ad hoc basis. For instance, the EU makes occasional use of the enablers of the UN and OSCE, as it does not always have a nationwide presence. In Mali, where the EU's activities are mostly capital-based, the UN collects, analyses and provides intelligence products to relevant partners, including embassies and the EU missions (interview #13). We see a similar situation in North Kosovo, where the EU makes use of the OSCE and UNMIK presence in the field for monitoring and reporting. This includes particularly monitoring the position of minorities. The information from the OSCE and UNMIK monitoring reports is integrated into the reports that the EU sends to the EEAS (interviews #9 and 10). While the EU could potentially collect such information itself, it is useful to avoid duplications in this case.

The further potential for synergies in terms of mission support also becomes clear when looking at the military cooperation in Mali between the EU and the UN. Because it is preferred for the Malian armed forces to be trained by the EU close to their deployment areas (in Northern Mali), the EU has been in extensive negotiations with the UN on a memorandum of understanding. This would allow the UN to provide logistical support and local facilities for the EU training mission to extend its presence into Gao and Kidal in the north (interviews #12, #13, #14 and #19). Yet it has not been straightforward to put the necessary exchange of capabilities in place. This highlights the possible obstacles for synergies, also in civilian crisis response, which go beyond diplomatic support and funding.

Finally we have not found any cases of exchange in *personnel* between these organizations, such as temporary (short-term) secondments, the provision of (specific) expertise, or back up staff in case of emergencies. This is slightly surprising given that the EU member states provide 55% of OSCE international staff in field missions (OSCE, 2017, p. 109), that much of the staff is seconded, and that many staff members work during their career for different international organizations in the field. If there are any synergies in terms of the use of staff across international organizations, it is largely at the member state level, where civilian staff is typically recruited and trained for all international missions (Dijkstra, Petrov, & Mahr, 2016).

## Conclusion

The EU aims to work together with key international partners in crisis response and peacebuilding. This article has evaluated the complementarity and synergies with UN and OSCE in terms of civilian capabilities. On the whole, the effort of these three international organizations is largely complementarity. We have identified both geographical and functional differentiation in their work. While we cannot speak of a formal division of labour, it is clear that the EU, UN and OSCE also are in a (permanent) state of competition. At the same time, we have shown—based on fieldwork in Kosovo, Mali and Armenia—that actual synergies between these organizations remain limited. The unity of effort remains largely a parallel exercise with less-than-extensive coordination and/or exchanges in capabilities.

To a certain extent these findings are not entirely surprising. Even when ignoring for a moment all sorts of political considerations, the EU, UN and OSCE are already short on civilian capabilities themselves. So if capabilities are to be donated to other international organizations, it should be for a good reason. For instance, the EU prides itself of (occasionally) donating armoured vehicles to the OSCE monitoring mission in Ukraine (OSCE, 2016) or making funding available for EU satellite imagery (European Commission, 2017). It helps, in this respect, that Ukraine is high on the EU agenda. At the same time, one wonders whether it would not be efficient to provide such support on a more structural basis. Indeed, if the EU really wants to put partnerships central as part of the EU Global Strategy, it would be worth redirecting some resources—including from the multi-billion Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace—to other international organizations.

At the same time, the analysis also makes clear that resources are not the only challenge. Exchanges and synergy can potentially result in dependencies between international organizations, which in turn reduces the autonomy of international organizations to make decisions and their ability to act (e.g. Biermann, 2017; Harsch, 2015). As such, most of the exchanges we have identified are either unidirectional (e.g. the EU providing funding to the OSCE), ad hoc (e.g. use of logos in Kosovo), or informally coordinated (Gebhard & Smith, 2015) (e.g. EU parallel support for OSCE in Armenia). Establishing more permanent exchanges and synergies, such as in the case of Mali, have proved more challenging.

## Notes

1. “Missions” in this article include civilian and civilian-military CSDP missions of the EU, peacekeeping and political/peacebuilding missions of the UN, and missions (field operations) of the OSCE. “Good offices” and electoral missions are excluded; as such this article does not include EU Special Representatives or Delegations, UN country teams, special coordinators or regional centres, or OSCE personal envoys.
2. 29 interviews were carried out, on the basis of anonymity, with key stakeholders (EU, UN, OSCE, diplomatic community, NGOs and think tank experts) in these countries between November 2016 and March 2017.
3. For comparisons between international organizations and military functions, see Mattelaer, 2013; Dijkstra, 2016.

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